Fig. 33. Meeting House in Nschüggebot (Ojek Family), Spanish Guinea, with Decorative Boards of Bark.

covered with charcoal drawings on the inside between the raffia boards. At this point, however, I cannot go into this art work in any greater detail (see Section 9, "Fine Arts").

If it were not for the people who enliven the house with their handicrafts and activities, /Fig. 32 appears here in the original text/ if the flaring fire did not lend the large, dark rooms a special, almost mysterious quality -- it would be too dreary. It is precisely here that one notices how everywhere only pulsating life man in his sad and in his happy hours, not the material environment, is capable of attracting us. The same room which we disposed of just now with a disparaging glance is capable of creating a totally different impression in the evenings when the men and young /69/ /Fig. 33 appears here in the original text/ people gradually congregate in the meeting house in order to listen to the old, hunchbacked Njema-Ndongo tell of the mysterious and uncanny creatures of the fabulous world. Indefatigably they listen, however long he may spin out his yarn, motionless they look at him as he restlessly rubs his hands over the fire, wags his finger threateningly, separates or pushes aside the logs when the

Fig. 34. Dwelling in Mákonanám (Ojek Family), Spanish Guinea.

fire gets too hot for him, and wards off the smoke from his face like a person gently but firmly sending a little child away! He looks as though he is talking to the fire and delivering a speech to the logs. Everybody listens in silence, everybody hangs on his words. And then follows a deliberate pause, after which he begins anew with impressive intonation; and at familiar places all the listeners enter into the narrative with a brief choral song in response to the solo part of the old man. Or there may be a bit of gossip to relate, with a hubbub of biting words, an occasion for spontaneous gaiety to prevail. On yet another occasion a performance by a famous xylophone artist will draw the population to the meeting house. The entire village, women and children included, takes part in these recitals; the children beat out the rhythm with small pieces of wood, while the women, with great dignity, beat together groundnuts and ngon which represent the "fee" and, softly humming a refrain, cast a meaningful glance in the direction of the tireless player.

The dwelling (mâl; plural, mandâ). Figure 34, like the meeting house, /70/ /Fig. 34 appears here in the original text/ has a gabled roof and a rectangular ground plan. Like meeting houses, dwellings have both temporary and permanent forms.

Then follows the warm midday meal which takes place between twelve and five o'clock, depending on when the woman returns from the plantation. The main meal, which is fairly substantial, occurs in the evening. This is not just one meal, however; the women have to cook two or three times and, indeed, even in the middle of the night in order to appease the hungry stomachs. They frequently deviate from this "rule," to be sure. If the store of provisions is ample and there is little work to do, they eat the whole day long; on the other hand, if anything comes up, they just as readily omit meals or fast an entire day.

In the main, meals consist of cassava and plantains. In addition to these, any of the other foods mentioned may be eaten, whatever is on hand.

Men and women usually eat separately. The woman takes care of herself as she is cooking and helps herself even to the men's food which is not meant for her, or she eats with her daughters and younger sons after she has sent the midday meal to her husband in the meeting house where the older boys also gather for food. /161/ On the other hand, the husband habitually goes home to take the late evening meal in the family circle, since by then it has become too cold or lonesome in the meeting house.

At all times, the Pangwe man eats quietly and with dignity, not without appreciative smacking of the lips and constant talking, however. Greedy eating (a ŋ̃ban a dzĩ) seems ridiculous and unbecoming to the Pangwe and is interpreted by him as a sign of bad rearing. Many of the precepts which the father gives his son make this point, and in proverbs and fairy tales (for instance, in the nice fairy tale of Bömme's gluttony, in the story of the greedy pig, and so forth) the same idea recurs.

Tableware is very sparse, as one would expect. In the case of liquid dishes, the cooking pot, if it is small, is placed in the midst of the company straight from the fire; if it is large, its contents are poured into a smaller pot. Everyone takes his spoon and eats from the common vessel. In the evening when the man eats at home, he usually has a pot of his own placed before him. Solid foods, for instance, plantains and cassava cutlets, are served on a banana leaf, and everyone takes them by hand. It is considered more refined to

777 case he has successfully passed the test, is washed with the water from the leaf vessel, and receives the crocodile's stone (Fig. 54) which will help him in the future to become a great chief and very wealthy. If he goes to the pile on which the things for young people are heaped, he will become a philanderer, and as such he will waste his money and come to nought. If he should go to the first pile, he is sure to become insane.

777 538 Many tales portray the effects of medicines for wealth which Essamniamabōge makes for one of his sons, usually Ekute E., who has sought him out in the land of the spirits. Here, too, a place is always cleared under a Copaifera, and Essamniamabōge then has an entire miniature village set up, with many huts or other

Fig. 54
Medicine for Wealth (stone from a crocodile's stomach, tied between little sticks so as not to be lost).

things to symbolize the treasures that can be expected. In addition, Essamniamabōge gives his son boxes which contain helpful souls who later will obtain wealth for the person, just like the little men of our fairy tales. Also, as frequently happens in our tales, the conclusion is always that all treasures, especially the houses and wives, disappear at one stroke, usually through the fault of the person concerned, and the man who was wealthy a moment ago is again as poor and miserable as before. Such a tale is reproduced here.

Ekute Essamniamabōge among the Souls

539 777 Ekute once said to himself, "Oh, I would like to go to the place where my mother was born!" Ekute had only his mother

who were settled among them and the Boulou. The last Beti groups to cross the Sanaga, blocked by those who had preceded them, have turned perpendicularly or obliquely to the general axis of migration.

The total migration was made exclusively by land, even when its axis followed the course of a navigable river. The Pahouin are not users of the pirogue, and the customary trails followed along ridges rather than valleys. Settlement is mainly linear, stretched along trails and, now, roads, in long ribbons, separated by empty areas.

The traditions dealing with this exodus are of three kinds: the collective tradition of the group, varying in detail from tribe to tribe but always agreeing in the broad outlines of the same theme; family traditions, consisting of a commentary on genealogies, the majority of which have not been collected and are by way of being lost due to the abandonment of the customary training of boys; finally, a pseudo tradition of contemporary invention, which is far from the least interesting. I shall here give an account only of the principal features of these traditions and, first, of the collective tradition.

According to this, the ancestors used to live in a country called mvo' ékanga or mvo' ékaña'a (Largeau: mvôgh étangha), which means something like "cloudy country" or "honorable country," depending on the tone, or perhaps both at the same time (1). I have

1. a) Radical kañ • to honor, to respect, whence ékañâ'a • honor, respect, veneration; b) radical kañ • to mark, to design, whence ékanga • mark, design, cloud; c) verb kañele • to lash, to shape /timber/, whence ékanga • bridge.

pointed out previously the legendary features of this land in the east, the details of which vary according to the informants. It should be observed in passing that they differ as to whether or not this land was the actual cradle of the ancestors and whether the latter came from a place located even more to the east, as the present pseudo tradition asserts (2).

2. The last of the Ntoumou storytellers sing to the accompaniment of a guitar, mvet, the exploits of the bikañ or bo'bikaña,

173
[533
538]

superhuman heroes, who include not only their ancestors but also the earliest well-known Europeans: Ngôtô Zambe (Rev. Good), Mendômô (Hauptmann von Hagen), Akôk (Marius Pascalet), etc., thus are found to be naturalized as it were and incorporated into tradition.

Driven out of this country by red giants (or by a red giant), the ancestors, fleeing to save their lives, were brought to a standstill at the Sanaga, incapable of crossing it until the intervention of the guardian of the waters, a python according to Beti and Boulou, a crocodile according to /16/ the Fang (1). By stretching himself across

1. Bertaut gives the names as mot yom and nga medja or ngan meja. Discounting a mistake in transcription, these expressions could mean "a being to be supplicated," "crocodile to be supplicated," from môt (Fang, môr, mur) = person; ngan = crocodile; ja'é (Boulou) dzak, dzaghé (Ewondo, Fang) = to ask, to supplicate; yom = to beg, to implore.

the river this animal formed a bridge which the ancestors crossed family by family, in order of primogeniture, until the moment when a child (or woman) wounded the animal's back by letting fall a weapon (or a torch). The animal dived below, abandoning on the right bank the Beti group that is still there today.

[10
122
124
175]

Osoe Nsanga, whence Europeans have derived "Sanaga," means "white river" or "river of the albino." White is the color of death; ghosts (bekôn) are white; albinos are thought to be offspring of incubi. Lastly, the land of the dead has always been situated in the west, toward the sea (man), even though the Pahouin could not have known the sea except by hearsay. Considered in connection with some of the legends collected by Trilles, these facts may lead us to think that the Pahouin in crossing the Sanaga were entering, at least symbolically, the land of the dead.

When they had reached the left bank, they found their road blocked by an impenetrable forest, with the single path obstructed by an

of speech, and this to a large extent owing to European influence, in particular compulsory schooling. The teaching of rhetoric played a great part in the traditional education of boys (nʒôô, nzoé = speaker, orator = chief), and initiation into various rites gave the initiates the right to use certain words forbidden to the uninitiated (2). Con-

2. I was never able to learn the real word for "skull" reserved for biéri initiates; I was only told the paraphrase, ékokoé nlo mɔ̂t, "shell of a man's head."

version to Christianity and instruction in colonial schools have brought about a definite deterioration in the language, by forcing traditional education to retreat or by destroying it. It is thus that the novel Nnanga kûn (no. 153), written after the war of 1914, is nowadays arduous reading for young Boulou.

The majority of the words in the language are formed from /22/ a biliteral root (consonant-vowel) or triliteral (consonant-vowel-consonant) to which affixes are added. There are thus series such as:

KI (Fang) or TYI (Boulou), radical—kié, tyé = power; éki, étyi = prohibition; tyik = to cut, to decide; tyi = to be under a prohibition; tyili = to lay under a prohibition, to forbid; étyé, ékié = iron, pl. bityé, bikie = sacramental money; ɔ̂tyɛ̃, ɔ̂n(i)ɛ̃ = knife; metyi, meki = blood, etc.

The most important affixes are the nominal classifiers, which permit the division of nouns and pronouns into nominal classes or semantic genders; sexual gender does not exist. There are five or six of these classes or genders, according to different writers. Semantic implication /sic/ is not always clear in true substantives, but it is much more so for verbal substantives. I give here the Boulou classes according to Bates:

I. nominal classifiers: m, n, n/be, b; pronominal classifiers: a, ay, w/be, b. —Personal class, names of persons, of personified animals; names of European origin. Verbal derivatives indicating the agent.

Ex: mot, bot = person; ngal, beyal = wife, female;
metoa, bemetoa = conveyance /voiture/;
mbo, bebo = he who does /makes/, from bo = to do /make/;
ndi = he who eats, from di = to eat.

6:Alexandre and Binet--158 G-5 (1946-1954) 1958 FH9 Fang FH9

4. Arts and Literature

531 The principal form of plastic art used to be sculpture, in wood or steatite. Aside from masks for associations, especially for the ngil, figures of ancestors, full-length figures or simply masks, and figures for ritual ceremonies were carved. Drums, seats, crossbows, sometimes imported chests, were decorated in demirelief. The features of a mask were only slightly indicated, the attitude of figures was rather stiff, while subjects in demirelief, particularly animals, were often very lively.

531 The sculptors were initiates of the different rites and with the decline of the latter, traditional sculpture has largely disappeared, to be 117 replaced by work in wood or ivory in the Barbes /?/ or Saint-Sulpice style /the implication of the second is of the commercial religious art sold in shops near the St.-Sulpice in Paris. —Tr./, thanks to the work of schools and missions. An interesting project at the professional school in Ebolowa, under the director, Lecoq, between 1946 and 1950, has had no sequel. However, there are a few indications that allow hope for the rise of a Christian art that will perhaps be original, alongside the commercial sculpture for tourists, which is extremely flourishing.

This conclusion holds good for painting, since some frescoes in Catholic chapels, particularly in Ewondo country, appear to be manifestations of a new art. Furthermore, painting is at present the popular art par excellence, in the form of frescoes inside and outside houses. Aside from religious subjects, one often sees paintings of animals, family scenes, portraits of local or world celebrities. A Boulou from Sangmélima, David Moncwoso, has established the features of the heroes of the novel Nnanga Mba in numerous frescoes throughout Boulou country. All this constitutes something new, because traditional art made little use of painting in this form. Huts were more likely to be decorated with geometrical figures with an esoteric meaning, in nothing but the three traditional colors, red, black, and white. Drawing was mostly represented by engraved designs, made with burin or red-hot iron on wooden objects, sometimes by charcoal drawings done on walls or rocks.

Literature was solely oral until the colonial period. It is not, however, accurate to say that the Pahouin were completely ignorant of writing. Aside from the quipu (biaff zeneghe —? —, according to

Largeau /sic/) and the mekutu alele, bundles of little sticks making it possible to communicate in code, they had a kind of pictography, ntilan, with tens, if not hundreds, of signs, mindem. These we know (insufficiently) from the counters used in the abia game, a kind of tarots, used as a game as much as for predicting the future; the pieces were made of the seeds, or rather the pods, of a mimosa common in the forest (Tetrapleura /125/ thonningii, according to Trilles). These signs had a surface meaning, understood by all, and an esoteric meaning, restricted to initiates. They made it possible if not to write down traditions as a whole, at least to draw up a kind of aid to memory to be used by the beyia bia. They also enabled scouts to leave messages for a main body of fighters that followed. Each clan, each family had its own ndem, sometimes depicted in its tattoo mark, ndan, which thus constituted a sort of coat of arms.

The old literature included stories or tales, minlaŋ, songs, bia, and chronicles, minkaŋete.

Trilles is responsible for collecting most of the tales (no. 165), which often took the form of fabliaux whose hero was none other than Ol' Br'er Terrapin, Kulu (emphatic or personal form of kûl), the earth tortoise (Cinyxis erosa), surrounded by Beme, the wild pig, stupid and gluttonous, Ze, the panther, mean and cunning, its principal enemy; Zo'o, the elephant, the king of beasts; Abɔp, the spider, artful and obliging; and the majority of the other forest animals (except, it seems, snakes, which no one ever likes to mention). Kulu, thanks to his shrewdness, always ends by getting out of the holes in which his caustic spirit or the old hostility between him and Ze have put him. Tales of magicians were also told, or stories about the conjugal mishaps of supposed ancestors. All such tales were in the public domain and were recited by anyone who felt competent. This was also the case with the puzzles and riddles that young people put to one another as a kind of flirtation.

Songs, however, were performed by specialists, even aside from ritual or magical songs. Some were used to accompany dances; they represented the most complete form of musical expression, with the tone of the words supposed to fit the music while being related to the movements of the dance. There are still beyia bia competent to lead a dance of this kind by improvisation, but they are few and very expensive. There also still exist players of the mvet (harp-guitar), whose repertory includes, beside the old sung legends, some modern

533 skits, often satirical, sometimes to the accompaniment of European tunes that have been adapted to the instrument. Choral song, finally, is very popular, using imported tunes that are often considerably improved by the native interpretation which makes extensive use of fugue and counterpoint. Unfortunately, these modern airs are not suited to the tonal system of the language, which they tend to impair when words are adapted to them.

538 Chronicles, minkaffete, of which the salutations, mebatan, were 173 in a way summaries, were part of traditional training and were recited 177 only on solemn occasions. They are falling into oblivion because of the considerable demands they made upon the memory and because of the time necessary for learning them by heart, without mentioning the fact that they contained incomprehensible passages, perhaps borrowed from tribes that were neighbors of the Pahouin before their great migration. /126/

177 The systems of transcription introduced by missionaries were first 538 used to translate the Scriptures and to compose hymns, which have not always had a good effect upon the language but have nonetheless become classics in spite of the mistakes and improprieties they often contain. After these works produced by Europeans in the native language, there have appeared in rapid succession works composed by Pahouin writing in their own language. The most remarkable is without doubt Nnanga kôn by the Boulou, Jemba Medu, which describes Boulou life at the time of the arrival of the first white men (nnanga kôn = phantom albino). This, to my knowledge, is the only novel composed in one of the languages of the group; its popularity is prodigious, to such a degree that its characters have entered into contemporary Boulou folklore.

204 There is a missionary press in Gabon and in the Cameroons. The papers with the largest circulation are Nleb Bekristen (Christians' Guide) (Ewondo, Catholic) and Mefoé (News) (Boulou, Protestant), which is read as far afield as Gabon. The lay press in French is not of much importance and its publications moreover are usually short lived.

538 A Pahouin literature in the French language is a recent — and significant — phenomenon. Oyono and Eza Boto-Mongo Beti are both from the Cameroons; neither Gabon nor Spanish Guinea have up to now produced a novelist.

535 The dance has lost a great deal in being deprived of its old ritual character. Formerly there was a specific dance for every ceremony,

68 495 781 to one or more culprits, who are immediately seized and led to the middle of the public square, where one of the practitioner's assistants is waiting with several cups of the liquid.

Those who, in previous ordeals, have asked to be given the poison to drink are also brought up at the same time.

Each in turn empties a cup: the effects vary according to the kind of poison.

Those who drink the éfán quickly develop a violent trembling, which convulses the whole body. They can hardly keep on their feet and would roll on the ground were they not supported by friends. If at this point they are able to urinate copiously, they will gradually recover and survive. However, for years they will have a persistent nervous tremor.

Those who drink the ikaja or the onaï seem, on the contrary, to be knocked out: they fall down, get up, and fall down again. They survive only if they can vomit the liquid.

Whatever the effect of the poison, all who have undergone the test are led before a log thrown like a bridge over a brook, or sometimes before a plank or a dead tree laid on the ground. They must tread it without help from one end to the other. If they teeter and fall, all the participants leap on them, [544] strike and kill them with clubs, tear them apart and eat them on the spot. However, the sorcerers or those who claim to be are never eaten but are burnt alive. Those who get through to the end of the plank have to pay a large fine. "There's no smoke without fire," seems to be the Fan proverb, translated into their idom as, "Ká abi fo ve fo -- there's no rat hole [539] without a rat!"

The totem enters to a fairly large extent into all these tests, either through the practitioner who invokes it or through the unfortunate accused who always have the right, quite illusory for them, to have a [565] piece of the totem boiled with the éfán (1) and to invoke it before drinking up the fatal

1. It is not for me to pass judgment on these ceremonies, or to show to what degree the practitioner plays the dominant role, often getting well paid